

Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission
Merom Conference Center, 8555 Phillip St, Merom, Sullivan County, Indiana 47861
September 10, 2008 1:00 pm

Voting Member Present:

Adams County – John Friedt
Carroll County - George Mears
Cass County - Janet Fawley
DNR – Dale Brier
Gibson County - N. Sherrell Marginet
Huntington County – Dave Hacker
Knox County - Shane Cooper
Miami County - Ken Einselen
Parke County – Penny Cox
Posey County - Ralph Weinzapfel
Sullivan County - John J. Gettinger
Tippecanoe County – Lucky Neiburger
Vermillion County - James McFall
Vigo County - Keith Ruble (alternate)
Warren County - Margy Deveral

Proxy Voters Present:

Allen County – Thom Maher

Non-Voting Members Present:

none

Voting Members Absent w/o Proxy:

Fountain County - Lowell Osborn
Jay County - Faron Parr
Wabash County - Michael Beauchamp
Wells County – Keith Huffman

Commission and DNR staff Present

Ron James – WHRCC Executive Director
Jewell Baxter - DNR

Guests:

Diann McIntosh - Vermillion County (alternate)
Tom Balduf – Historic Landmarks Found. Inc.
Eric Stallsmith – IndianaOutfitters.com

Call to Order, Receipt of Proxies, and Introductions; 7/9/08 Minutes Approved

John Gettinger opened the meeting at 1:03pm with introductions and the receipt of proxies. Thom Maher will be the proxy for Allen County. Dave Hacker motioned to approve the minutes as written and Janet Fawley seconded, motion carried.

President's Report (John Gettinger)

John detailed his activities on behalf of the Commission including attendance at the Vermillion County 'Wet Day' speaking to the gathering about the Wabash river, the Commission's activities and the river's historical role. John spoke to Sullivan County's development of a Busseron Creek Conservation District and their \$15,000.00 for education, including the development of outdoor classrooms at every elementary school in Sullivan County. John referred to the upcoming annual 8th grade river rafters trip which the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission is a sponsor. Finally, John reminded everyone of the state election and budget cycle, and of the biennial need for every county representative to seek out their legislators to secure support.

Executive Director's Report (Ron James)

Ron highlighted his activities since July including the well-attended Banks of the Wabash meeting in July; a request for brochures from one of the Justices of the Supreme Court; and presentations at the Warren County Board of Commissioners and the Grand Lake St. Mary/ Wabash (Ohio) joint watershed council. This had the dual purpose of obtaining border landowner contact information for the Upper Wabash River Basin Commission's best management program(BMP) as well as for our general outreach. Ron attended the Izaak Walton League national convention in Indiana and spoke with citizens from 36 states - mainly interested in the water trail. He mentioned that our booth and the showing of "The Wabash: Life on the 'Bright White' River" at the Indiana State Fair

were well received. Finally, Ron observed that another of our sponsored events, the Wabash Heritage Paddle Fest, grew for the third straight year – now putting nearly 400 paddlers on the lower river (Gibson & Posey Counties) in August.

Finance Report (Dale Brier)

The commission's current annual budget of \$91,000.00 (after executive-mandated 7% reserve; \$84,630 'spendable') ends on June 30, 2009. Dale has been directed by the DNR to submit a budget for \$84,630 per year for the 2009-11 budget cycles. The 7% reserve has become a permanent cut. If a percent reserve is subtracted from the new budget, the new 'spendable' amount will even lower. The state directive cuts 7% across the board for all state agencies (including DNR) biennial 2009-2011 budgets. When the state budget is passed, the legislature may increase, or decrease, funding for any specific program. During August, Ron J and Dale B did narratives for both the Commission Fund budget and the Corridor Fund. Dale passed out copies of these narratives after the break (see attached).

A discussion of the Bill for use of the royalties from mineral extraction from under the navigable waterways, its fate in the last legislature and needs for the upcoming legislature, was held. All members were asked to open discussion with their representatives and senators to locate sponsors for the bill again. John G. reiterated that it is the policy of this Commission to seek legislation to have these royalties used for cost-shared Corridor projects and, since projects take time to complete, the funds need to be kept in a non-reverting account. John noted that the budget funds under the DNR are different; those funds are for the operation of the commission.

Dale B. noted the DNR legislative liaison, Ryan Hoff, had left DNR. Dale said that he did not know if Ryan left a plan for the New Harmony Bridge, but that he would inquire of the new liaison when named. Sherrell Marginett noted that the bridge is operating, limited to one lane of traffic, but that the capability of continued operation is still very much in question.

Committee Reports

- **River Road Signs**: Shane Cooper received approval from the Knox County Board of Commissioners and their Highway Dept. to post 'River Road' signs. None are posted yet. Dave H. said that he had some signs up in Huntington County and that he and Ron Zartman have been working to determine the appropriate juncture between their respective counties. Ron J said that Michael Beauchamp has received approval and scouted locations. In his report, Michael B noted the Wabash County highway department's budget was cut, after posting approval, leaving him with a concern as to their ability. Ron said that there were currently a good number of the signs available and urged other members to choose appropriate routes as sites for the signs; one possible theme being the canal.
- **Community Signs**: Ralph said that the community road signs were in the hands of his Highway Dept. Ron J also said that the community signs are being well received and that he may run out. He then spoke of the different communities having more than one access points and needing signs for each point. Ron stated that he ordered 100 signs and that there were about 60% of them left. George M. said that he was not sure if the signs were up in Delphi as of yet. Ron mentioned ways to prevent the signs from being stolen or blowing away due to the material that they are made of.
- **Corridor Highway/Bridge Signs**: Ron J noted he had sent the order for the bridge corridor signs to DNR procurement, but had not heard any information back as yet.
- **Water Trail**: John G. related that Sullivan County's commissioners and counsel gave their approval on the bridge signs; their highway superintendent said the lettering for they signs could be provide but John would need to letter them. Mounting and theft deterrent systems were discussed. Ron J. mentioned he had only a couple of dozen WT Map 7 left while Keith Ruble has only a hundred or two. Though this may be the scarcest printed map, all nine of the WT maps are available in printable

form on our web site. All nine first edition maps need to be edited with updated and additional information. If all the maps are updated at the same time, a second edition printing could be had at a better rate than the first. It was suggested that each county representative mark up the water trail map from their area to correct errors, update contact info, and, importantly, add amenities that may be within walking distance of the trail. Dave H moved, 2nd by Ralph Weinzapfel, carried, that all commission members bring a map with the updated information to the Commission meeting in November. Janet F. asked about putting the minutes on line to remind everyone of the things that need to be done. Dale explained that there is an email list for the commissioners and minutes are normally not on line until they have been approved.

- Banks of the Wabash, Inc.: Ken Einselen noted (1) the next BOW board meeting is set for 10:00 a.m., Sept. 17 at the Terre Haute Public Library; (2) A City of Peru De-Trash on 9/6 resulted in feature coverage by the Peru press. 157 photos are viewable on-line. The next De-Trash the Wabash event would be October 11th in West Lafayette. This De-Trash is a re-scheduled event from a spring rain-out and follows a co-sponsored Purdue 'Green Week' clean-up set for 9/19; (3) BOW board members Bernie Dahl and Cecily Schneider, with Eric Stallsmith's help, have regained control of the BOW domain name (where our water trail signs point); (4) BOW is to join the Indiana Conservation Alliance, co-sponsor 'Conservation Day' with this group, and promote the Corridor's receipt of royalties as this session's legislative need; (5) the Banks' Board has agreed to host the Weatherwax Award Luncheon & 1812 Commemoration Kick-Off; (6) The budgets set for these latter two efforts will use some of the funds received by BOW as a result of the Corridor Commission's outreach efforts; and, (7) The Banks of the Wabash board will meet prior to the November 5th luncheon, at 10 a.m., at the Logansport Riverside Center for their November meeting.
- Legislative: Janet F. noted Senator Weatherwax is not able to attend a Nov. 12 meeting. Ken E moved that the next Commission meeting be moved to Logansport and set on either Nov. 19 or Nov. 5 based on the date Senator Weatherwax is able to attend at lunch; Jan F 2nd; the motion passed. A discussion of the invitation list was held. Jan is to notify Ron of the date and postcards will be sent to all invitees. The award has been ordered from the artist, Mercedes Brugh.
- Education: Ron J said that he met with the Bluffton "River Teacher", Beverly Balash. Beverly gladly accepted the task of correlating our 'Teach the River' materials with the 'Wabash Life' video and state curriculum requirements. She has been given copies of our materials.

Old Business

- 1812 Commemoration: Shane C conveyed Dale Phillips' request for our sponsorship of a committee to coordinate Indiana events during the bicentennial of the War of 1812. Suggestions have included living history events in Knox, Vermillion, Tippecanoe and other counties, along the path of Harrison's march. Historians, as well as CVB's, from the principal counties, will be invited to the November Commission meeting to enlist further committee members. Shane C., Keith R. and Diana M. volunteered to work on this committee.
- Commissioners' Presentations: Margy Deverall reported Ron J came to the Warren county commissioners' 7/21 meeting and received their support for the river road and community signs. Vermillion's Board of Commissioners is next. Ron J again requested each river commissioner schedule these visits as his goal is to meet with all county Boards' every 2 years.
- Indiana State Fair: Volunteers at this year's booth were recognized and thanked. Ron mentioned that the fair would be longer next year. Dale B. volunteered to inquire of the organizer of the DNR building as to space for an unmanned display, set up for the entire run of the fair, to promote the river and our water trail. A better/bigger display would need to be created.
- 4th Ed. Brochure: Each county representative is to review their county's descriptive text for re-writing/update along with alternative photos. Volunteers for the committee are still being sought; Jan

F. agreed to chair the effort. With a proposed publication date of next September, funding sources (county Boards, CVBs, Nat'l Park Serv., Historic Preserv., for e.g.) were discussed.

- Indiana Rivers Rally '09: Appears stalled due to a lack of point leadership, though a date (mid-June 2009) has been set. John G opined that there would be support, and funding, for this state event if someone had the time to work on it. No volunteers were identified.

New Business

WabashRiver.us: Eric Stallsmith requested the Commission 'lease' WabashRiver.us by paying his company a monthly fee to maintain, update and expand the site with content directed by the Commission, including ads sold to corridor businesses (which he projects would cover the costs of the lease and further program costs). The basic site is already up and running as a result of a grant from the DeHaan Foundation that was administered through the Banks of the Wabash. Depending on content changes, Eric S estimated \$4,000 as an annual lease cost. Norm Neiburger moved for a committee to investigate the leasing of the website; George M. 2nd; carried. Dale B, Margy D, John G and Norman 'Lucky' N (Chair) volunteered to serve.

Ron reported that the Central Wabash Watershed group, which has obtained an IDEM 319 grant for financing, is setting up a three watershed urban/rural improvement comparison study. Ron J mentioned that the group was also looking for a Watershed Coordinator.

Announcements & General Discussion

- Nature Conservancy Bio-Diversity Assessment: Janet F reported having already attended one of the promised corridor Bio-Diversity Assessment meetings and found the information, a review of prior research with computerized interpolation, very interesting. It is believed the Conservancy will return to a future Commission meeting once the compilation is complete.
- Paddle Fest: Commission sponsorship (\$500.00) garnered a center spot on the event t-shirt.
- Water Quality Trading: A study group is setting up to study the feasibility of "water quality trading" in the Wabash watershed. Lucky N moved to send a letter to the group requesting the Commission be kept apprised on the study and results. Ken E 2nd. The motion carried.
- Corridor Calendar: Sullivan County 8th grade rafting trips – Sept 29th through Oct 2. Montezuma is having a 5k run on October 4. Due to the need for flexibility, an email or card will announce the next Commission meeting date, either November 5 or 19.
- Personnel Change ahead: Dale B. mentioned that Melody Sweat, who had taken Steve Morris' place as Trails & Streams Chief, has left the DNR.
- Wabash River Enhancement Corporation: Lucky N reported that the WREC completed public comment meetings requesting suggestions for river development or enhancement. Lucky stated that these suggestions would be on wabashriver.net by the end of September.

John G adjourned the meeting at 4:06 p.m.